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Comparative approach to the study of policy of tsarist and soviet government in relation to Islam

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Abstract

Kazakhstan was not an independent, free state throughout nearly three centuries. It was a part of the Russian Empire since 1731, and it entered 'Unbreakable Union of freeborn Republics, Great Russia has welded forever to stand' in 1922. Islam was constantly oppressed, restrained in the period when Kazakhstan was turned into one of the national provinces of tsarist Russia and became one of the Soviet republics. There were times when a real threat appeared over the religion that it would be rooted out and eradicated from the consciousness of millions of Kazakhs. It is impossible to claim that only Islam got under propaganda of the atheistic pressure during the communism construction. The pressure was experienced also by other traditional religions. But, nevertheless, unlike Christianity, other faiths were exposed to bigger persecution during the Soviet period. Probably, it was due to, firstly, a large number the Orthodox in comparison with the Muslims. Secondly, it may be considered as the continuity of anti-Islamic activity of the previous authorities. The article covers the attitude of autocracy and the Soviet authorities towards the Muslim doctrine. On the basis of a comparative analysis to study the relationship of the Muslim religion by the autocracy and the Soviet leadership. The study is based on the logical methods of historical research, such as analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, analogy, generalization, and special - a comparative-historical method, historical, genetic, dialectical. The actions of tsarist autocracy in the religious sphere had the purposeful and interconnected character: all support and creating favorable conditions for the distribution of Orthodoxy and its eminence, bans and oppressions concerning Muslim faith. But the pursued policy did not lead to refusal of Kazakhs from Islam. So in this regard we have come with an interesting observation and conclusion. Overall, continuous prosecution of the Moslem doctrine and its supporters by the tsarist and Soviet governments did not bring desirable results. Islam withstood under the pressure of the Russian tsarism and the Bolshevik government, and then, with the acquisition of the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, it revives again, and we are eyewitnesses of that.

Keywords: christianization policy; religion, islam, atheism, the colonial policy.

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1. Introduction

Kazakhstan was not an independent, free state throughout nearly three centuries. It was a part of the Russian Empire since 1731, and it entered 'Unbreakable Union of freeborn Republics, Great Russia has welded forever to stand' in 1922. Islam was constantly oppressed, restrained in the period when Kazakhstan was turned into one of the national provinces of tsarist Russia and became one of the Soviet republics. There were times when a real threat appeared over the religion that it would be rooted out and eradicated from the consciousness of millions of Kazakhs. It is impossible to claim that only Islam got under propaganda of the atheistic pressure during the communism construction. The pressure was experienced also by other traditional religions. But, nevertheless, unlike Christianity, other faiths were exposed to bigger persecution during the Soviet period. Probably, it was due to, firstly, a large number the Orthodox in comparison with the Muslims. Secondly, it may be considered as the continuity of anti-Islamic activity of the previous authorities. The article covers the attitude of autocracy and the Soviet authorities towards the Muslim doctrine.

2. Main body

During the implementation of Christianization, the conductors of which were Russian officials, missionaries and church attendants, Muslim mosques and mektebes, i.e. schools, were closed, mullahs were exposed to persecution. Kazakhs came off from national roots: customs, traditions, which had been developing for centuries; they were forced to live Russian way of life. As a result the imminence hung over the Kazakhs as an independent nation.

All this strengthened grievance in minds and hearts of the Kazakh people against the colonizer policy of the tsarism. A special place in the protests was taken by true attendants of Muslim clergy: mullahs, ishans, kazy, as a more competent, conscious part of the population. The Russian ideologists tried to convict by all means those Muslim attendants who showed discontent with tsarism policy. They tried to attribute various sins to such representatives.

The tsarist government supported Muslim clergy and people who professed Islam for some period. Decrees about toleration were issued, the Russian government ordered to build Muslim divine service and educational rooms: mosques and madrasahs, in Kazakhstan. Ekaterina II recognized Islam as a lawful religion by the Decree on September 22, 1788. Also the Orenburg Mohammedan spiritual meeting (ЦГА РК. Ф.64; Оп.1, д.2427.-Л.15) was established by this Decree.

It would not be absolutely correct to call the created management an establishment where problems of Muslims were solved. It carried out administrative tasks, and had to facilitate colonial bodies in supervision over Mohammedans. Naturally, it was more convenient for imperial administration to deal with one loyal mufti, who was under their constant surveillance and was known for devotion to the Russian power. But a greater number of mullahs were a more difficult problem to deal with. However, the possibility of influence on them was found in giving a salary to certain mullahs. Just these mullahs had no due authority. Such representatives of Muslim clergy were told about in the leaflets which appeared in large settlements after their capture by the Russian armies. In "The Kokandskaya petition to our Kyrgyz" from 1860 it was said that some 'Muslims try to receive positions', meaning spiritual attendants and their feudal lords, and others from among ordinary inhabitants 'serve them as guides, fight with their brothers in faith' (ЦГА РУ. Ф.И-715; Оп.1, д.25.- Л.461).

At the beginning of the tsarist decrees pursuance reliable Tatar mullahs were sent to the steppe, the construction of mosques was encouraged and those who wished to commit the hajj to Mecca were not interfered. Therefore 'after the pacification of the Kyrgyz hordes filling space between Russia and China, the sermon of the Koran has found there such soil for itself that it has never had here before, in the middle of disorder and unrest of the Kyrgyz, and may happen not to have anywhere nowadays. Mosques have extremely increased in their number and settled in the places that used to be wild, desert and unsafe for religious promotion. The colonies of Muslim dealers have appeared. In these settlements mosques are immediately erected and the schools are established next to them. These schools are becoming the centres of Moslem, gathering admirers and sending propagandists' (Туркестанский сборник, С.221). Such actions of the government represented the attempts to use Moslem doctrine in interests of the colonial policy.

Tsarist support to Moslem ensured that the pressure from governmental bodies and the Holy Synod on Moslem was not strong up to the middle of the XIX century. Therefore various requests of the Muslim population during this period were decided in their favour in most cases.

This also explains giving the green light to the construction of mosques, houses of worship. However, applicants did not receive the answer to their inquiries at once. It was necessary to address repeatedly to the local authorities, who demanded additional data on the issue in question.

The Kokchetav district chief submitted the application from the Kazakh of the Kuturkulsky volost K.Baygozhin to the governor general of Western Siberia in June, 1879. It contained a public errand, plan and request for permission to him to construct at his own expense a mosque. It appeared that the submitted documents did not conform to requirements and the new were requested. The mosque was assumed to construct in the natural hole where Kazakhs lived in an aul, i.e. a village, numbering up to 600 yurtas, which are Kazakh mobile houses, and 50 houses. The applicant considered the construction of the mosque and the maintenance of its clergy his own responsibility. There was not another mosque in that volost. The issue of the construction was resolved positively after overcoming a number of bureaucratic delays in January, 1881, which was confirmed by the answer from the governor general of Western Siberia (ГАОМО.Ф.3; Оп.13, д.17369.- Л.1-3). Over time such permissions were given less and less frequently, as the emergence of the Temporary provisions, which operated almost until the end of the XIX century, legalized some bans concerning Moslem doctrine in Kazakhstan.

During the construction of mosques Muslims had to meet plenty of requirements which local authorities demanded. If the emergence of a mosque or a house of worship violated the specified conditions, it was expected by a sad fate, up to destruction, and the organizer was inflicted punishment. Under article 1073 of the code about punishments, besides money penalty, imposed by the court sentence on a guilty for the creation of a mosque 'without an appropriate permission for that, local administration are entitled to close such mosques at their discretion' (Крафт, 1898, С.91).

Many Kazakhs fulfilled various duties in the Russian military districts. For this reason there was a need to have a military mullah there, and it was what the Russian military personnel petitioned for. In 1882-1884 a corporal's request for the opening in the city Verniy positions of the military spiritual mullah was considered, 'according to the expressed desire of the Mohammedan society of Verniy city and the named in the note enclosed' (ЦГА РК. Ф.64; Оп.1, д.84.- Л.1). No arguments given for the opening of the position of a military mullah: "a considerable number serving as well as not serving lowest military officials of a Mohammedan origin", because of the absence of 'a regular military mullah' dying 'remain without confession', 'relatives of the dead are revolted with such situation', were taken into consideration (Л.1 об.). The request was refused. It was motivated with the argument that every 'competent Muslim can be a mullah' and that the Steppe Governor general and the top military commander of the Omsk military district Kolpakovsky 'has never heard any Mohammedan beginning to repent of sins to the mullah at death's door' (Л.2).

Tsarist autocracy considered Islam as an obstacle in a way of distribution of Christianity. Some preachers of Orthodoxy in their eagerness to lift the value of Christianity dared to speak about Moslem resentful speeches. The Kazakhs who tried to stop such verbal attacks by means of the highest church administration only received complaints from them. One of such cases took place in the Steppe Krai. The Omsk spiritual consistory applies to the district administration to declare to the Kyrgyz living in their district that on his application on calling to account the priest who offended Moslem doctrine, the resolution of the very pastor arrived: 'The impudent tale-bearer the Kyrgyz forgot that he lives not in Turkey, but in Orthodox and Christian Russia. To leave without consequences' (Бөкейхан, 1993, Б.74). After such reaction of the church authorities, there was no sense to address to them any more. This case had also other side effects, which the colonial administration did not see at once. Understanding futility of their applications, Kazakhs were more and more convinced that other means of opposition were necessary.

The oppression of Islam was carried out to help immigrants to settle on new lands and to strengthen governing bodies. It was declared unambiguously by the people heading areas. So, lieutenant general Sukhotin considered necessary to take measures '... about prevention Islam influence from growing at least until the

Russian power gets stronger here, and the immigrant becomes independent, and the apportionment of lands in the steppe for a settlement of the Russian population comes to the end' (ЦГА РК. Ф.64; Оп.1, д.450.- Л.30 об.)

The reverse side of the measures undertaken by the government for creating favorable conditions for the distribution of Orthodoxy was creating constraining conditions for adherents of Islam. For example, it was forbidden to build more than one mosque in a volost. In the Provision on the management in the Uralskaya, Turgayskaya, Akmolinskaya and Semipalatinskaya areas from October 21, 1868, paragraph 253, chapter V 'About the management of spiritual affairs of the Kyrgyz' said that 'Kyrgyz societies as a part of not less than one volost are permitted to have one mullah' (История Казахстана, 2001, С.88). This point remained and in the Provision from 1891 (С.95). Prohibitive measures led to the situation when mosques were built in tens but secretly. As an active representative of Kazakh intellectuals B. Karatayev noted in the report in the *Аукап* magazine, 'in one area there were more than one thousand mosques' (Субханбердина et al., 1995, Б.212). In case of detection of such mosques they were exposed to destruction. Sometimes the authorities, avoiding possibility of unrest among the population, did not knock them down but left 'until final destruction by time as any mending or repair works are prohibited' (ЦГА РК. Ф.64; Оп.1, д.3555.- Л.21).

Such policy was pursued purposefully, as mosques and houses of worship of Muslims had to give way to the churches where Kazakhs had to come as parishioners. The Orthodox immigrants who flooded the Kazakh steppe, also were on the side with those who oppressed the Moslem doctrine. They deprived Kazakhs not only of the earth but also mosques. It happened simply and unintentionally at first sight: there were mosques on the selected sites and Kazakhs either left them, or took apart.

A known Kazakh fighter for freedom and independence of the country A.Bukeykhan gives a number of such examples: 'The Kyrgyz took apart Kozhageldy Tasybayev's mosque as the three sites of land of Aleksandrovsky, Ilyinsky, and Isky are cut next to it. Baytokin's mosque was demolished as it appeared to be in the estate of Novoyavlensky settlement. Isabay Kambarov's, Dzhanybek Myrzatayev's and Ayssa Sarymsakov's mosques are still where they have been built. But the border of not populated land sites passes closely. Their (mosques') fate will be the same as the previous ones' when peasants come to these sites '. It turns out, however, that cases of taking a mosque apart or its abandoning should not be dramatized. Those mosques which 'were made dirty by peasants on purpose' became a much worse problem as one of the members reported at the Meeting of the Governor General. He knew 5 such cases. Peasants kept calves in other mosques, 'as it was made with Dzhilkarins' mosque in Yavlennoye settlement' (Бөкейхан, Б.252). The impunity and blasphemy towards the Moslem doctrine of Russian peasants generated a negative reaction of the indigenous people to them and to the authorities allowing such behavior.

The authorities saw a brake in Islam, which prevented a Muslim from joining the Russian culture, through which it was possible to come nearer to the universal progress. Accusing pan-Islamists of the hostile attitude towards Christianity representatives of the colonial administration cite as an example the Kazan Tatars who 'having been for three centuries and a half in constant, close communication with us, still are, in relation to us, the bearers of their religious and national separatism' (ЦГА РК. Ф.369; Оп.1, д.3722.- Л.36). The same moods appeared in the Kazakh society as well.

In the years of the first Russian revolution (1905-1907) the Muslim movement became more active. Its participants exposed the tsarist policy in the religious sphere, they wrote about the oppression tested by Muslims of Russia. So, one of the appeals said: 'The most unfortunate and poor people of all the people ever being under pressure were we, so, for example: if we wished to publish in a Muslim language any brochure, the latter, that is the brochure, always came back to us being crossed-out, lengthened or shortened in red ink of the censor. When opening schools we always met obstacles from directors who kicked out our teachers, administrators of schools deprived teachers of two-three pence of the income. Besides, they, like wolves in the environment of a herd, treated us as they wanted, printing in missionary magazines and newspapers articles of offensive character concerning sacred Koran and Mohammedan religion and spreading humiliating rumors all over the world' (ЦГА РК. Ф.369; Оп.1, д.3722.- Л.119 об.).

The increased religious movement before the World War I among the Russian Muslims was recognized by the local and central authorities. Therefore it was thought to be necessary that provincial boards before

confirming a mullah to the post should very carefully collect data and references of him from appropriate bodies. A mullah could be confirmed to the post only after collecting positive information on his candidate and receiving the confirmation on his non-participation in Muslim movement. This measure was provided by articles 1393, 1394, 1424 and 1435 of the Charter of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions (Vol.XI Code of laws, part I) (ЦГА РК. Ф.90; Оп.1, д.773.- Л.55).

The attention was especially paid to the clarification of where the candidate got the spiritual education. In case that a prospective mullah had been trained in one of the Muslim centres which was 'the centre of the distribution of the pan-Islamic direction', the solution of the question was postponed and most often remained unresolved. In the opinion of the Kazakh population, an educated mullah aroused honor and respect. Observing ceremonialism of Islam and armed with knowledge, such a mullah could as it was written in the document 'compete easily with the Russian power in influence among the population and was a big hater of the government' (ЦГА РК. Ф.369; Оп.1, д.780.- Л.10).

It was clear that such a mullah could not be the conductor of the tsarist policy. A semi-literate, loyal to the autocracy, mullah suited officials of the colonial administration more.

At the end of April, 1914 at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation a special meeting on Muslim affairs took place. The main objective of the Meeting was the exchange of opinions on a current state of the Russian Moslem, from the point of view of their religious life and public currents. It would seem that the questions concerning problems of the Muslim population should be considered there. But, at the initiative of the management of the Steppe Krai it was offered at the discussion of the governmental actions first to raise the question of the Russian Orthodox population who had not got stronger on new lands yet and only after that to meet the satisfaction of the fair needs and requirements of the Muslim part of the population' (ЦГА РК. Ф.64; Оп.1, д.2674.- Л.5).

Even at such a special meeting which has given the name to a forum, again the care about the Orthodox was defined as paramount, and the questions of the Muslim population were brought up later, which is a bright example of the infringement and Islam oppression. Another important thing was that similar meetings enabled to conduct acquaintance of Kazakhs to other Muslim people. During the discussion of some questions common problems arouse that was one more factor for the rapprochement of Muslims and that was absolutely undesirable to the authorities. So they tried to avoid similar events and they tried to do their best to allow there the most reliable people from the local population.

The events of 1916, that is national liberation revolt put end to existence of the tsarist regime in Kazakhstan. The unrest among Kazakhs had just calmed down as two revolutions broke out in Russia next year.

The events of February, 1917, planted confidence in the hearts of Muslims of the Empire in the approach of dramatic changes. On March 3, 1917 the newspaper 'Alash' received the telegram which said that the meeting had taken place in Moscow in which 'more than fifteen thousand Muslims took part: Tatars, Kyrgyz and Sarts' (ЦГА РУ. Ф.И-1009; Оп.1, д.7.- Л.18). At the request of the meeting telegrams were sent by the delegates to the chairman of the Council of Ministers, the prince Lvov, Chairman of the State Duma Rodzyanko and the chairman of the Muslim fraction Tevkelev, which said: 'the great event happened: the rotten building of the old power, which pressed the people of Great Russia for so long, failed, and we, the Muslims living in Moscow, experience unknown pleasant feeling at the sight of this picture of a dawn of the revival of all the nationalities making Russia. Before this any movement, any step forward undertaken by Muslims on the way to progress, freedom and light life perished under an iron hand of the reactionary power' (Л.18). But, unfortunately, the Provisional government did not solve the problems of Muslims, either, and the Bolshevik party, which came in turn, brought a lot of surprises.

Certainly, it is impossible to declare categorically that every representative of Muslim clergy without an exception took care of the people. Among them there were enough people who set purpose to live terrestrial life in personal prosperity. Such people were awarded with apt expressions in proverbs and sayings of the Muslim people. For example, Kazakhs say about self-interest of mullahs:

Weed reduces earth,

Khodja, mullah reduces people.

If your pocket is empty, Don't go to mullah.

Without man's death mullah can't become rich.

The appropriate proverbs and sayings can be found in Uyghur and Uzbek folklore:

Mullah knows how to take, but can't give.

In other words when mullah takes, he thanks God, when he needs to give, he asks for God's help (Уахатов, 1965, C.4, 19, 20). It is clear that such attendants of clergy cannot become respectable or authoritative with any congregation.

In the Soviet period when the construction of communistic society was proclaimed, any beliefs were called past remnants by the atheistic promotion. In practice the differentiated approach to various faiths and religious associations was noticed. The main religions, Orthodoxy and Islam, competed with atheism in the ideological sphere, but the absolute majority of the population gravitated to them owing to tradition. Besides, Orthodox and Muslim canons did not undermine state foundations, and moral imperatives did not contradict the moral code of a builder of communism (for that simple reason that the last was made on the basis of Christian precepts). It should be noted that there was essential difference in the relationships of Orthodoxy and Islam at tsarism and during the Soviet period. In pre-revolutionary Russia Orthodoxy aspired, after military-political expansion, for the extension of its influence among the indigenous people of the attached territories. There where Islam was a traditional religion of the autochthonic population of new colonies it took generally a defensive position. During the Soviet period both religions sought to keep their adherents in traditional spheres of their influence from total attacks of militant atheism.

The Moslem received a stronger blow from Bolsheviks, who Muslims counted and hoped very much for. After the establishment of the proletariat dictatorship all religions suffered. The Communist party, who regarded the creation of a godless state as a task of paramount importance of their policy, led a resolute fight against everything that had any relation to religion. It was necessary for this purpose 'to explain to masses that we have to combat everything that smells like God and that this fight is one of the necessary, inevitable forms of class fight'. The task was set accurately: 'Those who are for communism, for destruction of the class society cannot but fight against religion, against its doctrine and the organization' (Гурьев, 1930, C.5.) The results of the fight were evident soon. In pre-revolutionary Russia there were more than 50 thousand mosques. By 1929 3700 Muslim communities still functioned, by the beginning of 1985 there were 392 left in the territory of the USSR (Ермаков, 1993, C. 92).

Such sharp reduction of the quantity of officially operating mosques did not testify to mass withdrawal of believers from religion. All the efforts on the distraction of the population from religion were reduced to the liquidation of the registered associations in an administrative way. Administrative closing of mosques led to the emergence of the parallel structures which were in a semi-legal state. By this time the Muslim clergy had already saved up solid experience of survival. The Russian Orthodox Church and autocracy served useful service involuntarily with their policy of the Islam oppression, thank for it Muslims developed saving tactics in the conditions of prosecution. The network of unregistered mosques in certain areas 20 times exceeded the quantity of registered (C.17).

The policy of the Soviet state relating to Islam can be divided into five periods: 1917-1928 – the first stage of relationship of the Soviet state and Islam, being characterized with confessional activity of the Kazakh population and the compelled tolerance of the Soviet power. 1929-1942 – the period of the confrontation between the state and Islam ended with the suppression of spiritual freedoms of the Kazakh people. Only deeply hidden in soul belief helped Kazakhs to endure repressions and to weaken the heat of class fights in society. 1943 -mid 1960s are characterized by departure of the state from an antireligious course, but the organization of strict control of Islam by various bodies for religions both republican and union level. The life of numerous believers existed parallel to them, went underground where the number of informal mullahs increased, religious practices were officiated secretly. In the mid 1960s -1980s the relations of the state and Islam passed difficult evolution. Muslims of Kazakhstan were in a closed, underground, but independent state. Hidden deeply in the people Islam gained a new quality. In the conditions when losses of ethnic culture are especially notable, and Kazakhs lost an important marker of a people - their language, in these conditions the religion supported the unity of the Kazakh

society. This condition of a national condition remained uncontrollable to the political power. In 1980-1991 a period of tense relations of the state and Islam took place. The visible truce ended, the tension increased in the relations. 'The forgotten Muslims' wakened, the role of Islam changed. The attempts to toughen a religious course failed. The end of the 1980s was marked by the cardinal change of the state and religious relations in the USSR – derogation of the state from atheistic positions. The characteristic given to Kazakhs referring to their indifference to religion is not absolutely right. It would seem that the Russian conqueror subdued physically Kazakh people for some time, but it could not subdue it spiritually.

3. Conclusion

So, we can note that actions of tsarist autocracy in the religious sphere had the purposeful and interconnected character: all support and creating favorable conditions for the distribution of Orthodoxy and its eminence, bans and oppressions concerning Muslim faith. But the pursued policy did not lead to refusal of Kazakhs from Islam. So in this regard we have come with an interesting observation and conclusion. Overall, continuous prosecution of the Moslem doctrine and its supporters by the tsarist and Soviet governments did not bring desirable results. Islam withstood under the pressure of the Russian tsarism and the Bolshevik government, and then, with the acquisition of the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, it revives again, and we are eyewitnesses of that. In the modern conditions one of the ways of national identification is religious identification. Emphasizing the role of Islam for Kazakhs the President of RK N.A.Nazarbayev (1999) notes its importance: 'and understanding it becomes an important characteristic of our national consciousness, especially after long years of distortion of the role and sense of this great and humanistic religion'.

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